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ABSTRACT

The call to a career in education does not come from logic or reason; rather, teachers are propelled by the deeper meaning of education--the meaning behind curricular instruction. Educators are driven by an artistic impulse to guide their students on the individual quest for intellectual enlightenment. An instructor cannot teach the essentials of his or her own craft to others; the drive to educate must originate within the individual. Society expects its teachers to feel this call to the mission of education, but it does not acknowledge the intuitive drive as an acceptable motivating force. Teaching, according to today's standards, is a profession--not an art. Artists and professionals are not the same. When the artistic impulse is removed from the instructor, quality of education is replaced by quantity, and conformity and depersonalization of education result. Preestablished, shared criteria for educational standards inhibit the call to education, further remove teachers from the level of educator/artist, and shuffle them onto the level of professional. The discrepancy between an instructor's job description and the mission of education must be recognized and eliminated. (KM)

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THE GROWING CHASM BETWEEN MISSION AND JOB

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Presidential Address

National Meeting of the Association for Humanistic Education

Denver, Colorodo

April, 1989

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THE NEED TO SHARE A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

I would like to talk with you about something we do not speak of in teachers lounges or faculty meetings. I am not even sure whether anybody here will know what I am talking about. Yet I have to take the risk. For while in other times and places what I have to say may be taken for granted, that which I find missing in our own current debate over education seems to me to be of fundamental importance to the dialogue amongst ourselves and between we as educators and the public.

I have never said to anybody else, in so many words, what I am about to say here. But if I do not disclose to you, my colleagues, that which the most intrinsically links me with you I will never know whether you are linked to me in this way and all the implications for our times that I want to draw from this disclosure will surely seem to you like airy fairy nonsense.

I recognize that the personal experience I will share with you is probably very different from your own. Yet it is the sense of a "call" or "path" that you may recognize in your own experiences. If my personal

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experience can find company at the level of the call, then I think you may agree with me that this subject I am raising may be of crucial importance to education in our times.

THE CALL

I feel I have a call to being an educator. I have never seen God or the 'burning bush'. I have had in my life what are called religious, even mystical, experiences. But I am not even a nominal Jew or follower of any religion or sect. The call did not hit me at one time. In fact, most often it has been very very difficult for me to discern this call. I am still both hearing and doubting that I hear a call. The call seems to take place throughout my life. I do not even recognize this life span continuity until I recognize something in everyday experience which "speaks" to me. When I am in the right circumstances, I feel these are speaking to me but in the sense of a feeling "this is you or your home" or as in putting on the right shoe for your foot.

But the comfortable metaphor of feeling at home does not quite say what I mean. For when I hear this call in an experience, that experience seems also to be excitingly perturbing to the core. It lights me up, turns me on: empowers me. I feel powerfully at home in the classroom. Yet teaching is only one aspect of this call. The greater call is as educator. The sense of educator does not diminish when I leave the classroom. What I am doing now, speaking to you this way, I sense as my passionate obligation. I cannot be fully myself unless I speak to the best in education.

I know what is best in education because I experienced it, finally, as an undergraduate. I passed through four years of the most incredibly insightful and transformative experiences I had ever known. Those were the years, without pot, acid, health foods or meditation, which were the most

deepening and mind expanding of my life. I understood what an education could be and could do for a person. But this undergraduate experience was not the source of my call, it was a step along the way of following that call. The navigational signs indicating this way for me flashed early in my life even before I entered school and during that period when schooling or teaching or educating seemed the most alien to my inclinations and abilities.

When I was a small child, no matter whether we were stringing a group of wagons together to make a train, or playing ball, I preferred the role of being outside of what I was in: feeling best playing the dispatcher or the radio broadcaster than driver or passenger or player or even manager of the team.

Another passion I had, later, was Detroit. Yes, the city of Detroit. I spent years of my middle childhood...often while playing hookey from school...walking, biking or bussing up and down its streets, the same streets over and over hundreds of times. I went to the top of the Fisher, Penobscot or Book Cadillac buildings and looked down and around from each vantage to all the others and then went to the ground and looked up. On days I dressed up like a rich kid and sat in the posh hotel lobbies and days after dressed to be saved and served on Michigan Avenue's skid row soup kitchens. I came to know Detroit inside and out and upside and down.

I was the unpaid guide who understood that city of Detroit as no paid guide ever knew or presented it. My greatest joy was guiding. Later I took a job which felt right to me as taxi-driver. I was not your typical taxi cab driver. Sometimes I would pay the meter bill just to complete the tour I was giving. Sometimes the customer would pay for the whole day just to get the tour.

I was not only a bad student during my primary and secondary years in

school, I was ultimately placed in a class for the slow learner. This was based both on performance and a measured I.Q. of 80. Later, by advise of my shop teacher, Mr. Jeske, and reinforced by the growing problems I was having at home, my parents sent me to a military school. By that point, I was being classed as what we now call a "behavior disorder" problem. The less kind and gentle term then was "incorrigible".

I ultimately managed to technically graduate from high school. I messed up at every job, mostly factory work in Detroit, and was finally given a last chance as sweeper of lathe shavings at Ford's River Rouge steel mill. This was the only future I saw for myself. But I got partially reconnected to other possibilities when I took a door to door sales job. This led to other sales jobs and back to guiding. When I sold carpeting as one example, I guided people through the carpet from its variations of Wilton or Axminster or Twist weaved backing to its tightness, ply, loop or its unique materials, body and style. I took the customer, in their minds, through the odyssey of rug and carpet creation at the mills in far distant lands called Philadelphia or Dalton or Isphahan. I never knew where any of these lands were actually located.

It was at the end of seven years as real estate agent, at 27, that I knew one day...at one single moment...while waiting for a customer, that I was going to college. I put my application together and took the entrance examination. Miss White, the counselor tried as kindly as possible to inform me that I was the last person to attempt college: "This is the mean on the quantitative" she pointed to the first curve on what I later learned was a profile and her finger slid to the very bottom. "This is your score". She passed through the four categories. I had scored at the bottom of each. Nothing she said had any significance for me whatsoever. I simply sat there waiting for her to find the way I would enter college. I knew she would.

Because I knew I was going to go through college.

Though right through to the end of my college education I scored at the bottom of reading and writing tests, I ended up turning down grant offers to a variety of graduate schools. After driving a cab the year of my graduation, I took the few hundred dollars I'd earned and boarded a student ship for France. Five years later I completed a doctoral dissertation in philosophical psychology at the Sorbonne: in French.

It is not that the testers had been wrong. They were right about what they were measuring. They and all the "vocational" counselors simply did not understand the path I was on. I didn't know then nor do I understand now what was drawing me. But the path put me in touch with a string of people and events which, in some bizaar way seemed to be waiting for me. None of these heuristic encounters seem earned by me in any objective sense. Others more talented, more skilled and more personally ambitious should well have had these encounters before me. The only quality I seemed to exhibit was being fully where I was.

My reading pace was no more than two pages an hour. It is not too much better than that today. I came to learn grammar, punctuation and spelling by osmosis. Yet, I received a "B" in that first introductory English course where ten books, including the Bible and Vanity Fair were assigned. I stayed with the page, with the word, until I felt myself at the inside of these and, finally, on the inside of the authors. I came to share the human space they were coming from and then knew what they were saying because I could see what they were seeing. It was at this space that I first met the existentialists with whom I later ended up studying in Paris and Albert Schweitzer who I came to meet in person when my first teaching contract with the French Government sent me to Gabon, Africa. That is how I came to meet Abe Maslow, in a shared space, well before we met in person and it was

Maslow, in person, who ultimately recommended me as Chairman of the West Georgia Psychology department where, over the past two decades, we have developed a humanistic psychology department: to explore such mysteries as these of human potential.

THE CONFIDENCE OF EMPOWERMENT

To extend what I am trying to say is that this feeling of being on the right path, for me, this fundamental sense of empowerment, precedes the actual definable facts or the nature of the experiences which await me on that path and precedes, as well, skills and techniques. Put differently, I feel the power to be where I am to be before I encounter, let alone master, facts or learn skills or develop techniques. Nor when I speak of this path do I refer to talent. I was a wonderful play wagon train dispatcher, baseball broadcaster and amature guide. But I was never really talented at these. In fact now I would not want to be any of these. I recognize these as signals, navigational buoys lighted for me along a way which I then come to recognize as my own path.

What characterizes my particular call the best is the term Educator. This includes but is not encompassed by teaching. It is reaching out through and beyond what is taught to something that I see or think I see in and beyond these particulars which gives a fuller sense of life and meaning. Of those things seen and that "unseen" beyond their observable face, James Joyce put it: "Its whatness leaps to us from the vestment of its appearance; the object achieves its epiphany".

I do not want my students to take what I point to as truths. Nor do I want followers. I am constantly in doubt myself, just as I doubt that what I am saying to you will make sense or is even valid rather than vain. Still, I am not without certain internal checks. I feel right when I point as far

into the hidden veins of the material as I can, as when I was "selling" carpet or trying to make the ball game exciting or guiding people through the steely plainness of apparent Detroit to its dazzling soul. I feel right when I do this. I feel not right when I do less. In fact when I am at my best I do not feel this is me at all.

From the heart of these internal checks, what I see in advance and how I show it, that is, doing the right thing at the right time, I call intuition. I feel I can, but am not sure, distinguish this intuition from projection or inference or speculation because I only know it is intuition for sure when I validate it. The philosopher Henri Bergson said this and I recognized it as valid for me. He said intuition lends itself to validation.

It is certain to me that this path or any given particular intuitions are not logical. But, it is not certain to me that reason, even logic, and intuition are opposites in some absolute sense. If the final project is coherent that coherence had its germ in the initial intuition and, likewise, the intuition is ever present...like the sketch lines below the paint...in the final product.

Great works of art or everyday experiences tell us that we've seen or done something right before we knew what it was we were moving towards or how we got there. A call or vocation is a big intuition. It is seeing something way ahead for yourself that...if you follow the path or, as they say, your star... comes to be validated along the way.

The same Henri Bergson spoke to my experience when he wrote of this life long intuition of coming to know himself. Bergson said that when he was young, he was at one time this, another that; sometimes very high, sometimes very low, sometimes very mean; sometimes very good. He had a variety of interests which often seemed mutually incompatible. He

constantly despaired because though each role or temper or state or interest felt like him in part, he couldn't imagine what he was altogether. Then, at some point along this disparately divided life, he came to see, nearly all at once, (which I call a revelation), that all of these so different and more often contradictory tendancies were, in musical terms, variations: assonances, dissonances, points, counterpoints, on a theme...his life theme.

Once he discerned this as variations on a theme, these differences and contradictions began to cohere, make sense, from his earliest childhood out towards his most distant future...the completion of his symphony. His moment(s) of revelation simultaneously informed him that from here on, he was the composer of his symphony whose theme he was just discovering. As he composed, created in tune with the theme being revealed in its variations, he would discover, discern, what his symphony sounded like, who he was. But to be "himself", he had to create what he was in process of discovering.

The Greeks spoke of this creative centered discovery in terms of the internal relationship between fate and destiny. Your fate is what you come in with. We sometimes call this now our determinants and the existentialists called these the "givens". But our fate reaches teleologically towards something important out beyond, and in the struggles, both successes and failures, (remember Oedipus was forced into discovery of his destiny by trying to escape his fate) we come to discern and realize our destiny, which, as in Oedipus, we one way or another must "choose" to live out.

A call, in the Christian tradition, is a vocation. Where we are sent by this call is a mission. Vocatus, Missus sum = I am called, I am sent.

THE CULTURAL CALL AND SOCIETAL JOB

Let me now begin to draw out the implications I see for education in our times based on the type of experience I have just shared with you. I know I am not alone in having such experiences. For if I cannot speak to my colleagues of these I can speak to others across time and space who share their experiences with me in writings or art. Or I can find these experiences embedded in psychological and philosophical views or even hear these implicitely revered in the implicit pulsebeat of the average person in our society. My experience of a "call" has a deep strain of tradition in our culture. Because we live out the Hellenic-Christian tradition, this sense of Call and Mission are very much a part of our culture and are dreaming giants in its deepest resevoir of meanings and values.

This is why people who know nothing of Greek or of Christianity, value two of the major vocations in our society, that of healing and that of educating. Deep down, there is something sacred about these. And, as sacred, it is expected that those following these vocations have a sense of mission. Persons who enter these vocations are expected to do for and show important things to the rest of us. They are expected to be fully trustworthy and honest because they are following their call to where they were sent which, for the Christians is God's way and for the Hellenics the path to health and truth.

In Carl Jung's terms, these vocations and others are even more deeply grounded than in our historical culture. We recognize these calls and missions from out of our pre-historic "racial" collective unconscious. While denying many of Jung's assumptions, the existentialists, exemplified by Sartre's "fundamental project", tend to see this oasis of transcendant meaning in the desert of absurdity obliging the paradox of "choosing to be who we are".

If the Christians, Hellenics, Jungians, Bergsonians and Existentialists

and the average man and women (at some level of their beings) all recognize, though rarely speak of, something like a call and mission while not agreeing on the source or even validity of ulterior meanings, then how do we reconcile this widely shared belief and value with the state of education as we see it today?

For years, teachers did not unionize because they did not see their vocation as a job, that is, an avocation. (Christ's carpentry was an avocation for him, not his call or mission.) But in this scientific utilitarian period, we educators don't cite our call or mission or even the art that educating becomes when it is realized as a great self-validating intuition. Rather, we say we are professionals.

True, there are dimensions of professionalism inherent to our field. But are we willing to settle for the classification as professional because that sounds like the best bargain we can come to in our times? Are we aware of the price we may be paying for such a compromise? People respect and trust a professional for different reasons than they trust one who has a calling. A professional will act in an expected social manner within a predefined set of ethics and standards. The artist is not predictable and dependable in these ways but is trustworthy in other ways, namely, by risking to go beyond the expected in order to make valid, show us, intuitions along the path he is called to follow. The painting or original composition validates the intuition. The experience of the best of education validates the call.

THE SPLIT

I supect that we educators couldn't trust our scientifically-utilitarian oriented society to trust us as artists. Given this double-edged timidity before challenges we justify ourselves as

professionals with official certificates of courses taken attesting to factually accrued knowledge and technical skills. Like any professional school, and unlike art schools, we who teach teachers came to convince even ourselves that we could teach the essentials of our art. Certainly we are not totally out of touch with other informal criteria. We feel some applicants to our professional education schools are good "teacher material", or "love children", or may, themselves, have had a good teacher who inspired them or, at the college level, or were inquiring researchers. But we have come less and less to ask of our novices the question asked of those who enter the priesthood. Have you been called?

We educators have come to ask this question less and less of ourselves? While all the time sensing that educating is an art prior to and beyond being a science or technology or even profession.

It is true that we, often reluctantly, write "mission" statements and state all the ideals engrained in all times or, more often, popular to our times and clients and all these stated ideals ring true and good even to ourselves as they are transformed into our "objectives". And then we are asked to account for these objectives on a step by step basis, within each class session, over the semester of classes and over all the years our department and school will be teaching this curriculum and subject matter. And we evaluate our success and vow to improve when we fall short according to one of our preestablished and shared criterion. Would an artist make such a commitment?

We assess and evaluate along the lines of each criterion according to the logical system we have devised to break it down into its elementary parts. We break down the tests we use for evaluation into even more discreet...and isolating...elementary bits and apply one or another system of statistics to determine how meaningful, that is signficant at the .05

level, are our tests and other evaluation tools and in order to distinguish one from another of us along one or another scale. We end up presuming to know quality via quantity. And then we form our judgments of good or bad, success or failure, on this presumption. Do we really believe quality is reduceable to quantity?

That we feel we can do this bisecting...or do this while doubting the quality-can-be-broken-down-into-quantity presumption...is a quirk of our times. Education has a certain meaning in the scientific-utilitarian-technological times in which we live. For while our stated mission ideals include and may even be headed by our value of opening the human child to his or her fullest human potentials, we do not really see how the sum of the parts equal, let alone exceed, the whole.

We certainly do not see how this value of a bisected-whole human child moving towards her or his full human potential ultimately coincides with what this utilitarian society really needs. What would our society really do with such a human? Or with millions of them? And stripped of this sense that the greater man and the greater society are, ultimately, identical goals we find ourselves split, doubtful, militantly espousing abstract ideals or assuaging our cynicism in whatever the perks of body or vanity are afforded by the job. Our raison d'etre becomes "We love to work with children"; our personal goal is being good and acceeding to the will of power or the majority opinion in the name of harmony. This, evidently, "in the interest of the pupil". Any way, we feel at the end of our own educations disempowered. So naturally we then proceed to prepare the child for power somewhere at the end of his or her education. How easy it is is to forget the power at the heart of education itself.

Our humanistic rebellion of the Sixties and Seventies was one manifestation of and reaction against this split between the call from the

heart of education and the educational mission defined from without. We reacted against the actual and impending sense of conformity and depersonalization at the end of, and therfor in the process of, education and stressed rather our individuality in the fuller sense than either Protestants, the demands of democracy, or Adam Smith Economists understood this. We reaffirmed our fuller humanness. But we humanistic rebels did so by ignoring or dismissing or reacting against those social needs and attitudes we saw as oppressive. We didn't see that the problem was not in the specific but in the anti-educucational distortion into which it had been twisted.

We called, as example, for "affective", instead of "cognitive" education. Because cognitive had come to mean in our times just systematically learning in our heads what our society considered important without an insistence on an understanding of this, to borrow from Micheal Polanyi, as Personal Knowledge. We became preoccupied with creativity because recognition of it previously had been so lacking in our education, intelligence tests and mechancally productive society.

Personally, I have a hard time distinguishing my call as either affective or cognitive; intelligence or creativity. That is why, today, I have a hard time dealing with assessments which divide educational matter into "affective" and "cognitive" "components", as is our new way of "balancing things". When I look at the stories of the great artists and thinkers I feel that they also would have a hard time responding to such assessment forms. They are passionate, or deeply feeling thinkers. Their genius is neither measurable on a Stanford-Binet nor the Barron-Welsh scale of originality. Nor is their genius a special mark of being superhuman. Rather, it is a mark of being more human, i.e., more in touch with our common humanness.

The great visionaries are compassionate. Compassion in Oriental philosophies implies pain; for the existentialists, angst. It is from our pain that we feel and therefor see clearly (clairvoyant) beyond ourselves. For that is what our pain is, that recognition that our everyday ego identity is not all, nor even the most essential, contact with reality. We only come to see, have a vision of this reality in its fuller extended possibilities, when we struggle with and, ultimately, surrender, i.e., (se rendre) or render our narrower views to the greater ones which speak more fully to the struggles and potentials we all share. 'Se rendre' is not joyless passivity nor selflessness but, on the contrary, joyful passionate feeling at home with the very best in your"self". Compassion is spirit; spirit is heart and when we come from our heart we cut through the bureaucratic realities of daily experience to the heart of life. We can see from the heart of ourself to the heart of the child and settle for no education which cuts us off from our centers. We see further than most and we are propelled by what we see. Seen this way, we can understand what Aristotle was getting to when he called touch the sense of validation. And the deeper meaning of our "touchy-feely" humanistic psychology...different but ultimately more life engendering than the detached validation requirements of science, technology, business and current education...hits home.

THE BIG AND LITTLE PEOPLE

Children, our students, know this struggle between everyday, "objective" reality and the heart of reality, though we rarely help them to recognize it for what it is. Much of what we...from our social-utilitarian frame of reference...call adolescent crises the French call "la crise spirituelle". My daughter characterizes the struggle between the small and

greater self in terms of the "big" and "little people". "We little people are like marionnettes through which the big people talk". To go further with her great but in process insight, she does not need a psychology of adjustment to the little people, but a humanistic and transpersonal psychology, or a good humanities education where such things are spoken to us by poets, artists and philosophers, which hearing invites her little self out towards her and our greater self. This is not the same as learning civics and social responsibility.

Like compassion and vision, though in a sense more personal to us, the call we receive and the path along which we are sent, are intrinsically beyond us personally. Yet, these link us to the beyond (within everything) which implies the best for our society, perhaps even the best for our scientific society. For before science there was the vision of science or what Bronowski calls the greatest creative product of Western Civilization. And before every certified act of science is, as Einstein realized, the creativity engendering human intuition. Before every business, say McDonalds, there was Ray Krup's vision. Is it less true that before the "great society" that politicians claim to be leading us towards, there is vision, call and mission?

We substitute for these terms motivation and incentives. The student is "not highly motivated". He or she will not be motivated, it is presumed, until given the right combination of positive and negative incentives. Certainly this view is valid within its space. But nobody hearing a call or who is sent on a mission lacks "motivation" nor does that term, "being motivated" fully describe that person's experience. We come closer when we say "intrinsic motivation". But intrinsic motivation, as the lives of the creative indicate, rarely follows our curricular and course outlines; our lesson plans, and is barely tapped by our complex of accountibility

instruments. If education does ultimately coincide with the ideals of our "mission" statements, it is likely that it will have passed through the inner and not outer path. But like intuition in our current Zeitgeist, this path will receive none of the credit or even recognition.

REEMPOWERMENT

Are we ashamed to talk about this inner path, except perhaps in sequestered places and spaces such as this? Why? Is it that we do not believe that others in our current society's state of mind would understand such talk? Is it that we lack this trust in that society even when we know that Jung calls this respect for and recognition of the vocation of Educator is an archetype? Or do we secular educators feel this all sounds too religious? Or do we lack trust in ourselves? Do we doubt our own calling?

Today there is a great discrepency between vocation and job; between mission and job description or task orientation. Perhaps much of what we call "burn out" or our sense of powerlessness before the social forces could be attributed to this experienced conflict. Perhaps the first steps out of "burn out" and towards "reempowerment" is to recognize this conflict as such.

Thank you for letting me join you in this space. I appreciate your hearing me out. Distinguishing your own from my personal experiences, nonetheless, do you, my fellow educators, recognize anything I have said?